

Congressional Complexities Challenge Climate Change Efforts

by **Carlyn Reichel**

While President Obama has pledged a U.S. commitment to lead the campaign against the dangers of climate change through global partnerships, a complicating factor confronting such sweeping international efforts is the need to obtain approval from sometimes reluctant national legislatures.

The United States Constitution authorizes the president to negotiate treaties with foreign governments, but stipulates that the U.S. Senate must ratify them with a two-thirds majority vote before they can become binding on the United States – a requirement that has stymied many presidents' efforts over the years. That means at least 67 of 100 senators must approve any treaty on climate change and emissions reduction that comes out of this December's United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting for it to constitute binding U.S. policy.

Although the United States was a signatory to the 1998 Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, it was never ratified by the Senate.

President Obama described a fundamental shift in the U.S. attitude when he addressed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Summit on Climate Change, September 22. Obama touted the progress his administration has already made on the issue. "I am proud to say that the United States has done more to promote clean energy and reduce carbon pollution in the last eight months than at any other time in our history," he said.

One of the first bills Obama signed into law, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, included more than \$80 billion for clean-energy investment. Earlier this summer, Obama directed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Transportation Department to implement a new policy aimed at reducing greenhouse gas pollution by increasing fuel-economy standards for passenger vehicles.

By 2016, all new cars and trucks will be required to average 35.5 miles per gallon (15 kilometers per liter), up from the current standard of 27.5 mpg for cars and 22.5 mpg for light trucks,

including sports utility vehicles. This change alone is projected to save 6.8 billion liters of oil.

Another piece of legislation, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, passed the U.S. House of Representatives earlier this year and is awaiting action in the Senate. This bill sets out policy to cut U.S. carbon dioxide emissions 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020 and 83 percent by 2050 – targets comparable to those set by European Union nations and other developed countries.

Michael Froman, Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economic Affairs, called the House bill a "seismic change" in U.S. climate change policy.

(Continued on page 2)



Clean energy advocate, Stephen Smith, watches the electric meter on his solar-powered home in Knoxville, Tennessee, spin backwards on April 21, 2009, as the solar panels generate more electricity than his house is using. Smith's seven-kilowatt system is the largest residential system in the Tennessee Valley Authority's Generation Partners program, which pays for homegrown electricity. (AP Photo/Duncan Mansfield)

The American Center

4 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020 (Tel: 2262-4590; Fax: 2262-4595)
E-mail: mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov; Website: <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday)

H O L I D A Y S

January 1: New Year's Day
January 18: Martin Luther King's Birthday
January 26: Republic Day

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear Readers,

As I write this, I have just completed a one-month rotation with the Public Affairs Section at the American Center. I've had the privilege to do so many interesting things here: speaking to political students on U.S. elections, to mass media students about U.S. television, and to businessmen on the U.S. economy, to name just a few. I'm amazed by the breadth and scope of the activities conducted by everyone here.

I've met so many wonderful people who come to our programs, especially many new faces at the Center's 65th anniversary celebration. I hope some of you newbies become regulars, because it is indeed all our participating members who contribute to the vitality of this place – you are the texture, the fabric of the American Center.

Thanks to all of you – patrons, American staff, and especially all the local staff – for making my stint here so pleasant and memorable.

I look forward to continued work and engagement with you all.
All my best,



Bill Barry
Vice Consul and Public Affairs Enthusiast

(Continued from page 1)

The administration has made enacting a climate-change and clean-energy bill a priority in advance of the December Copenhagen meeting to underscore the U.S. commitment to action. Special Envoy for Climate Change, Todd Stern, testified earlier this month before the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming that “nothing the United States can do is more important for the international negotiation process than passing robust, comprehensive clean-energy legislation as soon as possible.”

While the president has expressed confidence that progress is being made to move an energy bill through the Senate, it is ultimately up to Senate leadership, not the president, to determine how quickly a bill moves from its committee to a Senate vote.

Even if an energy bill passes the Senate in the next few months, it is unlikely to be identical to the bill that passed the House in June. The two versions would go to a congressional conference committee where representatives from both chambers work to reconcile the differences. The new bill that emerges from the conference committee then must be approved again by both the House and the Senate before it can go to the president for his signature to pass into law.



Be a Fan!
Join us on Facebook

[www.facebook.com/
amcentermumbai](http://www.facebook.com/amcentermumbai)

The constitutional process suggests that U.S. negotiators may have to go to Copenhagen without the guidance of a national law limiting emissions. This is not stopping the momentum in other areas of the government, however.

“We want comprehensive energy legislation, but in the meantime we’re using the laws on the books to make a very important down payment,” said Carol Browner, Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change. In addition to the new fuel economy standards, the EPA on September 22, made final the first mandatory reporting requirement for facilities to publicly disclose their greenhouse gas emissions. The requirement takes effect, January 1, 2010.

“Taken together,” Obama said, “these steps represent a historic recognition on behalf of the American people and their government. We understand the gravity of the climate threat. We are determined to act. And we will meet our responsibility to future generations.”

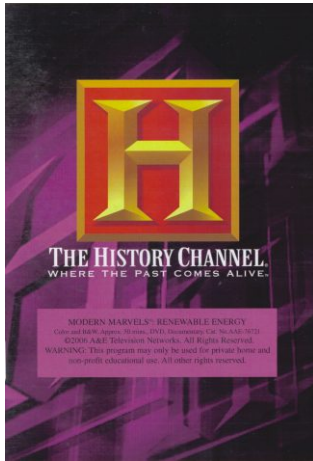
Carlyn Reichel is a Staff Writer for America.gov



Cattle trounce around a huge pile of manure as a pen is cleaned out at the JBS feed lot west of Greeley in Kersey, Colorado, September 29, 2009. JBS, which runs two of the largest feed yards and the local slaughterhouse, is testing a new technology that heats the cattle excrement and turns it into energy. (AP Photo/Ed Andrieski)

NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

Select Resources Available on Energy



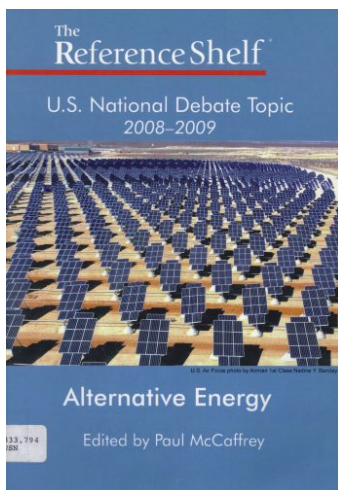
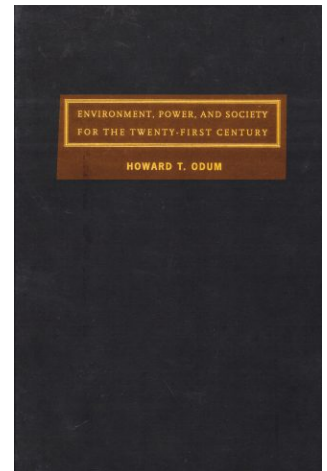
The History Channel: Modern Marvels – Renewable Energy
A&E Television Networks (2006, 50 mins)

This DVD explores the recent advances in renewable energy, especially solar, wind, geothermal, biofuel, and tidal power. Scientists and engineers at the forefront of research, development, and implementation, speak about renewable resource development.

Environment, Power, and Society for the Twenty-First Century: The Hierarchy of Energy

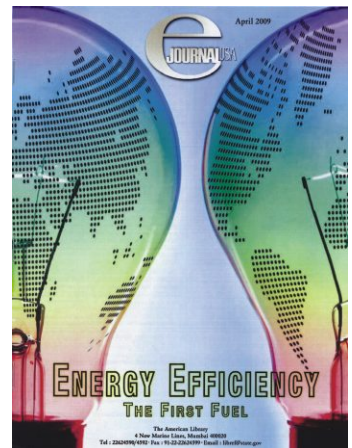
Edited by Howard T. Odum
Columbia University Press, 2007

This book focuses on the relationship of human energy systems, including social and economic systems, to the overall energy cycles of the Earth's ecosystem. The book is divided into 13 chapters including *Energy Laws and Maximum Power*; *Energy Hierarchy and Natural Value*; and *Energy and Economics*.



The Reference Shelf (Volume 80, Number 3)
U.S. National Debate Topic 2008-2009: Alternative Energy
Edited by Paul McCaffrey
The H. W. Wilson Company, 2008

This book examines renewable fuel sources, charting how each is obtained and used, as well as benefits and drawbacks. It also explores a number of issues such as global climate change, solar energy and wind power.



Energy Efficiency: The First Fuel (April 2009)

This issue of *eJournal USA* examines the strong U.S. record of tapping efficiency as a resource, and the accelerated efforts of individuals, organizations, and governments, to squeeze greater productivity from all energy sources. The articles focus on issues related to energy efficiency and conservation, U.S. initiatives on energy efficiency, clean and renewable energy, and tapping efficiency as a resource and energy innovation.

Ask a Librarian: Please write to the American Library at libref@state.gov for research queries related to information on U.S. international relations, education, law and legislation, English language, and literature.

**Square and Compass:
Freemasonry and America**
Discussion led by Steven Fox

Monday, January 25
American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

This lecture will give listeners an introduction to the Freemasons group, and discuss the history and role of the Freemasons since the early days of the United States. Steven Fox will discuss the role of Masonic ideas in America's founding documents, and how Freemasonry has continued to play a constructive role in America. We will also hear how Freemasonry links the U.S. and India.

Steven Fox joined the Department of State in 2009, as a Management Officer. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he worked in the field of public health. He had previously worked in China, Thailand, and Kuwait. He has been a Freemason for 20 years.

American Center Auditorium
3:30 and 6:30 p.m.

Friday, January 15

High-octane thriller stars Keanu Reeves as a member of a Chicago university scientific team that developed a cheap, pollution-free energy source. When the lab is attacked and Reeves framed for the murder of project head Morgan Freeman, he and fellow researcher Rachel Weisz must flee from federal agents as they try to break the sinister conspiracy trying to obtain their invention.

Chain Reaction
(1996, 107 mins)



Friday, January 22

A dogged TV reporter and cynical cameraman are present at a nuclear facility when the walls begin to shake ... and their quest to uncover the truth about this allegedly "minor incident" leads down a path of killers and deception. Jane Fonda, Michael Douglas and Jack Lemmon star.

The China Syndrome
(1979, 122 mins)



From left to right, Elena Gerebizza, Jelena Kmezic, and Janneke Bruil, paint coal green to dramatize their demand for clean energy, October 10, 2008, during a protest in front of the World Bank Building in Washington, D.C. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

Edited and designed by
Robyn Remeika and Rizwana Sayed

Copy edited by **Eva Doctor**

Printed by Durga Arts, 1 & 2 Dunhill Dome,
St. John Road, Bandra (W), Mumbai 400 050

Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.